

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS IN PREPARING FOR MUET SPEAKING AMONG FORM 6 STUDENTS IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN KUALA LUMPUR

Keberkesanan Perbincangan Kumpulan Dalam Membuat Persiapan Untuk Ujian Bertutur MUET
Dalam Kalangan Pelajar Tingkatan Enam Di Sebuah Sekolah Menengah Di Kuala Lumpur

¹Peter Ong, ²Rozaina Abd Razak, & ³Yek Hwa Ooi

¹Open University Malaysia

²IPGM Kampus Ilmu Khas, KL

³Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Corresponding author: peterong2222@gmail.com

Received: 26/3/2025 Revised: 6/6/2025 Accepted: 23/6/2025 Published: 10/10/2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61374/temp03.25>

ABSTRACT

This research seeks to determine the efficacy of a group discussion-oriented MUET speaking preparation approach for Form 6 (a Level 6 category under the Malaysian education system) learners preparing for MUET, otherwise known as the Malaysian University English Test. Although conventional methods of teaching have been widely employed, performance of students in the speaking component of the MUET is considered low. Speech impediments, lack of vocabulary and test anxiety interfere with some students' success. Common teaching methods, lecture by teacher and practice work of individuals do not always work to develop both interactive and communicative capabilities. Filling this gap, the paper investigates whether structured group discussions may provide a better substitute. Purposive sampling was used and a quasi-experimental study design was used. 76 students from a secondary school in Kuala Lumpur were selected and divided into an experimental group (discussion) and a control group (conventional method). Speaking tasks were given as pre- and post-assessment for 4 weeks and data were analyzed by means of independent samples t-tests. The results show that group discussion can significantly improve students' speaking proficiency for the group discussion method as a possible effective preparation method for MUET speaking component.

Keywords: MUET Speaking, Group Discussion, Quasi-Experimental Design, Independent Samples t-Test, Form 6 Students

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan keberkesanan pendekatan persediaan Ujian Bertutur MUET berasaskan perbincangan kumpulan dalam kalangan pelajar Tingkatan Enam (kategori Tahap 6 dalam sistem pendidikan Malaysia) yang sedang membuat persediaan untuk MUET, atau dikenali sebagai Malaysian University English Test. Walaupun kaedah pengajaran konvensional telah banyak digunakan, prestasi pelajar dalam komponen bertutur MUET masih dianggap rendah. Masalah seperti halangan pertuturan, kekurangan perbendaharaan kata, dan kebimbangan ketika ujian mengganggu kejayaan sebahagian pelajar. Kaedah pengajaran yang biasa seperti syarahan oleh guru dan latihan individu tidak selalu berkesan dalam membangunkan keupayaan interaktif dan komunikasi pelajar. Bagi mengisi jurang ini, kajian ini menyiasat sama ada perbincangan kumpulan secara berstruktur boleh menjadi alternatif yang lebih berkesan. Pensampelan bertujuan telah digunakan, dan reka bentuk kajian kuasi-eksperimen telah dilaksanakan. Seramai 76 orang pelajar dari sebuah sekolah menengah di Kuala Lumpur telah dipilih dan dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan: kumpulan eksperimen (perbincangan kumpulan) dan kumpulan kawalan (kaedah konvensional). Tugas bertutur telah diberikan sebagai penilaian pra dan pasca selama 4 minggu, dan data dianalisis menggunakan ujian-

t sampel bebas. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa perbincangan kumpulan dapat meningkatkan kemahiran bertutur pelajar dengan ketara, sekaligus mencadangkan bahawa kaedah perbincangan kumpulan merupakan satu pendekatan persediaan yang berkesan bagi komponen bertutur dalam MUET.

Kata kunci: *Ujian Bertutur MUET, Perbincangan Berkumpulan, Reka Bentuk Kuasi-Eksperimen, Ujian-t Sampel Bebas, Pelajar Tingkatan Enam*

INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian University English Test (MUET) is one of the most crucial tests in determining the English level of pre-university students in Malaysia. That includes a part that particularly causes problems for a lot of students: the speaking section. Therefore, writers need a method of getting ready. They have been proposed to improve speaking through contact-friendly, contact-learning, and communicative learning environments wizard. This research sought to determine the effectiveness of group discussions in enhancing MUET speaking performance in Form 6 students.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Malaysian University English Test (MUET) is a standardised examination that is given to evaluate the students' proficiency in English, especially in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Of these, the speaking test is the most daunting for many Form 6 students, who must express their ideas clearly on the spot, and in addition, communicate spontaneously in English. Especially when the background knowledge in English is a major requisition in the tertiary education institutions and work places, ideal preparatory practices are indispensable for the students who must perform well in MUET.

The effectiveness of group interactions in improving language skills has long been established. Such activities engage students, encourage critical thinking, and boost their confidence to use the language in real-life conversations. By analyzing the impact of this method, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing debate on effective language learning strategies, offering insights into how collaborative discussions can enhance students' achievements in MUET speaking assessments (Malaysian Examinations Council, 2021).

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Even through traditional teaching and learning approaches are still being used to improve students' performance in the MUET speaking, the results indicate otherwise. This disturbing trend gives rise to questions as to the efficacy of current pedagogical practices. A lot of students encounter persistent difficulties like lack of fluency, poor vocabulary retention, and high levels of speaking fear, seriously impeding their good performance in the exam.

Harun et al. (2021) also pointed out that MUET-speaking test is the most challenging component of MUET as students found that p or t of MUET-particularly the speaking component are weak in their speaking, giving responses and felt nervous. These things do not inspire confidence, the person then has a tendency to provide shorter unstructured answers. Similarly, Zulkflee et al. (2023) also indicated that speaking tasks can provoke high levels of stress and anxiety among English learners which result in mental blocks causing breakdowns of communication and lack of fluency.

These results highlight that there is an immediate requirement to re-evaluate the approach of our teaching associated with MUET preparation, specifically in addressing the building up students' autonomy, interactive competence and real-life experience of communication.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the impact of group discussions on students' performance in the MUET speaking component.
2. To compare the effectiveness of group discussions with traditional instructional methods in preparing students for MUET speaking.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do group discussions influence students' performance in the MUET speaking component?
2. Is there a significant difference in MUET speaking scores between students who participate in group discussions and those who receive traditional instruction?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H₀: There is no significant difference in MUET speaking performance between students using group discussions and those receiving traditional instruction.

H₁: Students who engage in group discussions perform significantly better in the MUET speaking component than those who receive traditional instruction.

Significance Of The Study

The study is meaningful for educators, students, and policymakers. The findings can help educators to create a teaching strategy which shows that group discussions are needed in MUET preparation. The methods which serve are more informal and formative ways of learning which students can use by applying more interactive and effective ways of learning to improve their speaking skills. The findings may also provide useful insights that policy makers and curriculum developers can use for evolving and enhancing language education policies as well as communicative approach to learning in secondary schools.

Scope of the Study

This study sets out to explore Form 6 students from a secondary school in Kuala Lumpur who prepare for MUET. The study investigates the speaking performance before and after a four-week intervention of group discussions. This study only focuses on the speaking part of MUET and does not involve any other skills such as listening, reading and writing.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, the sample consists only of 76 students from the same secondary school, which may not be generalisable to a wider population. Secondly, the length of the study (4 weeks) may not be enough to show speaking improvements in the long term. Generalizability of the results is also a concern due to conditions such as students' previous level of English proficiency, motivation and environment.

Gaps of the Study

Although the studies on English language learning strategies take up quite a lot of pages, little has been done regarding the strategy used among group discussions towards MUET speaking performance. In addition, the majority of the studies are conducted on university or ESL (English as a Second Language) learners, rather than concentrating on Form 6 students. To address this gap, the present study will investigate the impact of group discussion among secondary school students prepare MUET and to set example for future teachers at secondary education level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As earlier studies show, interactive learning is crucial in language learning. Based on one of the principles of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, this theory posits that cognition is developed through social interaction, thereby indicating an opportunity for discussion groups to enhance the learning of languages. Research has shown that collaborative learning environments like group discussions, significantly improve speaking by giving students a chance to practice and receive feedback (Johnson & Johnson, 2019). Though group discussions as a form of learning have been widely used, this technique so far has sparse research done on it with the objective of MUET preparation in mind.

MUET Speaking

The Malaysian University English Test (MUET) is a standardised test which measures the proficiency in English language in students and candidates who wish to pursue higher education programmes in local institutions of higher learning (Malaysian Examinations Council, 2021). The MUET speaking test measures oral proficiency in English and it consists of assessment of task fulfilment, language and communicative effectiveness. Academic hue of speaking tasks based on academic research, speaking tasks in MUET are planned to measure grammatical accuracy, appropriateness language, and effectiveness of communication in English-medium academic situations (Kaur et al., 2021). Regular practice of the MUET speaking component is crucial for developing fluency, confidence, and coherence in expressing ideas, as these skills are fundamental for academic success in tertiary education (Kaur et al., 2021).

Group Discussion

Group discussion is a powerful active learning stimulant that reengineers traditional classroom dynamics through active engagement of students. Research within the International Journal of STEM Education confirms that teaching strategies comprised of discussion-based interventions are a major driver of impactuation of active learning strategies (Nguyen et al., 2021). When students are involved in group discussion, they move from passive reception of information to active participation in learning. The interactive environment in group discussions offers a platform where students have to deal with information, come up with responses, and get their message across effectively. Such mental activity leads to better comprehension and retention of information compared to traditional lecture-based approaches.

Quasi-Experimental Design

A quasi-experimental design is used in cases where researchers want to investigate cause-and-effect relationships but do not have the ability to randomly assign participants into experimental and control groups. Unlike true experimental designs which use randomization to assure group equivalence, quasi-experiments often utilize pre-formed groups such as intact classrooms or schools. This design is very common in educational research due to ethical or practical reasons that make it impossible to randomly assign students.

Quasi-experimental designs may lack randomization, but with proper structuring, they can provide important insights. According to Creswell (2021), researchers can enhance the internal validity of such studies by using techniques such as matching groups based on characteristics, implementing pretests and posttests, and statistically controlling for confounding variables. The goal is to approximate the conditions of an experiment as closely as possible while recognizing the limitations inherent in the design.

Independent Samples t-Test

The independent samples t-test, as described by Creswell (2021), assesses whether the observed difference in means is likely due to the effect of the treatment or merely a result of chance. It assumes that the data are normally distributed and that the variances of the two groups are approximately equal. By calculating the t-value and comparing it with a critical value from the t-distribution, the researcher can determine the probability (p-value) of obtaining such a difference under the null hypothesis of no effect.

Form 6 Students

Form 6 students in Malaysia represent a unique cohort of young adults navigating one of the most challenging pre-university pathways in the country. These 17-19 year olds have chosen to pursue the *Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia* (STPM) qualification, often driven by financial considerations, academic ambitions, or simply the desire to challenge themselves with what many consider one of the toughest educational programs available. Most students are streamed into either Science or Arts/Humanities tracks. A typical Arts student might study: General Studies (*Pengajian Am*), mandatory for all students, Economics, History, Malay Language, Malaysian University English Test (MUET). Science stream students often combine subjects like Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology alongside General Studies (Malaysian Examinations Council, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

Quasi-experimental design (N=76), purposive sampling of Form 6 students from a secondary school in Kuala Lumpur. They were split into an experimental and a control group. The experimental group engaged in guided group discussions on MUET speaking and the control group had lecture-based instruction. The intervention lasted four weeks and included two sessions per week. Performance-related improvements were assessed through pre- and post-tests that were similar in nature to the MUET speaking assessment. Independent samples t-tests were used to analyze the data to assess the significance of the differences between groups.

Research Design

This study is based on a quantitative research design particularly quasi-experimental research on the effectiveness of group discussions in preparing Form 6 students for the MUET speaking component. A quasi-experimental design is employed as this design allows for the comparison of two groups, an experimental group that has participated in group discussions, and a control group that has undertaken traditional instruction. Data collected from the study is quantitative in nature; thus, objectivity is ensured because performance improvements of the students can be statistically analyzed.

Data Collection Methods

Pre- and post-tests data were collected which resemble the MUET speaking assessment. To assess the initial speaking proficiency of both groups, the pre-test was given before the intervention. Following the four weeks of intervention, participants were post tested to assess for gains in speaking skills. These exams gauged students' speaking through subject matter fluency, coherence, diction, and general speaking performance.

Sampling Techniques

Using purposive sampling, 76 Form 6 students from a secondary school in Kuala Lumpur were chosen to be participants in this study. The targeted sampling method was also used to ensure that participants had already prepared for MUET and to possess elementary-level English proficiency. Students were

randomly assigned to participate in either a few structured group discussions (experimental) or in traditional lecture-based instruction (control).

Data Analysis Procedures

Independent samples t-tests were performed to assess the effectiveness of group discussion comparing the mean scores of experimental and control group pre- and post-tests. This enabled the determination of if any difference in performance was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Moreover, mean, standard deviation and percentage gain were calculated to demonstrate descriptive statistics of scores.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, a number of ethical considerations were ensured. All participants, including guardians, provided written informed consent prior to data collection. All participants were informed of their right to voluntary participation and that they could leave any time without consequence. Students were informed that confidentiality and anonymity were assured to protect their identity and personal data. In addition, the research followed ethical research guidelines, and as such, steps were taken to uphold fairness and impartiality in the collection and analysis of data.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1

Group Statistics For Pretest Result Between Experimental Group And Control Group

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PreSpeakingMUET	Experimental	38	59.3947	2.72664	.44232
	Control	38	58.7895	2.97883	.48323

Interpretation of Group Statistics for Pre-Speaking MUET Scores

The statistical analysis of the Pre-Speaking MUET scores compares the performance of two groups: the Experimental group and the Control group. The data provides insights into the mean scores, standard deviations, and standard errors of both groups, which are essential in determining whether there is a significant difference in their performances before any intervention.

The mean score for the Experimental group is 59.39, while the Control group has a slightly lower mean score of 58.79. This suggests that, on average, students in the Experimental group performed marginally better than those in the Control group before the intervention. However, the difference in mean scores (0.6052) is relatively small, indicating that both groups started with comparable levels of speaking proficiency.

The standard deviation values further provide insights into the variability of scores within each group. The Experimental group has a standard deviation of 2.73, while the Control group has a slightly higher standard deviation of 2.98. This indicates that the scores in the Control group are slightly more dispersed from the mean compared to the Experimental group. However, both values are close in range, suggesting relatively similar consistency in score distribution across both groups.

The standard error of the mean (SEM) is also reported, with the Experimental group having an SEM of 0.44 and the Control group an SEM of 0.48. The SEM values indicate the precision of the mean estimate and suggest that the mean scores are relatively stable, with minimal variability. Since both groups have similar SEM values, it can be inferred that any observed difference in mean scores is not largely due to random sampling error.

In summary, the statistical data shows that the Experimental and Control groups had similar Pre-Speaking MUET scores before any experimental intervention. While the Experimental group had a slightly higher mean score, the differences in standard deviation and standard error suggest that both groups were comparable in terms of variability and precision. This data serves as a foundational reference point for further analysis, particularly in evaluating the effectiveness of any intervention applied to the Experimental group.

Table 2

Group Statistics For Posttest Result Between Experimental Group And Control Group

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PostSpeakingMUET	Experimental	38	87.6579	6.00124	.97353
	Control	38	82.2632	2.91023	.47210

Post-Speaking MUET Scores

After the intervention, the mean score of the Experimental group increased significantly to 87.66, while the Control group also showed improvement but to a lesser extent, with a mean score of 82.26. The difference in mean scores (5.39) suggests that the intervention applied to the Experimental group had a notable impact on their speaking performance, leading to a higher average score compared to the Control group.

The standard deviation for the Experimental group is 6.00, which is higher than its pre-test value, indicating greater variability in students' post-intervention scores. In contrast, the Control group has a standard deviation of 2.91, which is lower than that of the Experimental group. This suggests that while the intervention led to an overall increase in scores in the Experimental group, individual performance varied more widely compared to the Control group, where scores were more consistent.

The standard error of the mean (SEM) is 0.97 for the Experimental group and 0.47 for the Control group. The larger SEM in the Experimental group reflects the higher variability in post-test scores, suggesting that while the intervention had a positive impact, individual improvements were not uniform.

The statistical data indicates that both groups improved in their Post-Speaking MUET scores. However, the Experimental group exhibited a more substantial improvement, as reflected in the greater increase in the mean score. The higher standard deviation and SEM in the Experimental group suggest that while the intervention was effective, individual responses to it varied. This analysis supports the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing speaking performance, particularly in the Experimental group, and highlights the importance of considering variability in educational interventions.

Table 3

Independent Samples T Test For Posttest Result Between Experiment Group And Control Group

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-Mean tailed)	Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
PostSpeakingMUET	Equal variances assumed	24.409	.000	4.986	74	.000	5.39474	1.08196	3.23888	7.55059
	Equal variances not assumed			4.986	53.490	.000	5.39474	1.08196	3.22506	7.56441

Independent Samples t-Test Analysis

To determine whether the difference in Post-Speaking MUET scores between the Experimental and Control groups is statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was conducted.

Levene's Test yielded an F value of 24.409 with a significance level (Sig.) of .000. Since this p-value is less than .05, it indicates that the assumption of equal variances is violated, meaning that the variability in scores differs significantly between the two groups. However, the t-test results provide calculations under both equal and unequal variance assumptions.

The t-test results show a t-value of 4.986 with 74 degrees of freedom (df) under the assumption of equal variances and 53.490 df under the assumption of unequal variances. In both cases, the significance (2-tailed) value is .000, which is less than .05. This confirms that the difference in mean Post-Speaking MUET scores between the Experimental and Control groups is statistically significant.

The mean difference between the groups is 5.39474, with a standard error difference of 1.08196. The 95% confidence interval of the mean difference ranges from 3.23888 to 7.55059 under the assumption of equal variances and from 3.22506 to 7.56441 under the assumption of unequal variances. Since the confidence intervals do not include zero, it further supports the conclusion that there is a significant difference between the groups.

Hypothesis Testing

- Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference in the Post-Speaking MUET scores between the Experimental and Control groups.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant difference in the Post-Speaking MUET scores between the Experimental and Control groups.

Since the p-value (.000) is lower than the significance threshold of .05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1). This indicates that the intervention had a statistically significant positive effect on the speaking performance of the Experimental group compared to the Control group.

The statistical data indicates that both groups improved in their Post-Speaking MUET scores. However, the Experimental group exhibited a more substantial improvement, as reflected in the greater increase in the mean score. The higher standard deviation and SEM in the Experimental group suggest that while the intervention was effective, individual responses to it varied. The results of the independent samples t-test confirm that the difference in mean scores between the two groups is statistically

significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that the intervention had a meaningful impact on enhancing students' speaking performance.

Justification for the Use of an Independent Samples t-Test

An independent samples t-test was used in this study to identify if the difference in Post-Speaking MUET scores between the Experimental and Control groups was significant. This test was chosen according to the statistical procedure but also for the nature of the data, design and conditions assumed.

To begin, the dependent variable in this study, Post-Speaking MUET score, is continuous and measured at the interval level of measurement. These type of data are appropriate to be analysed using parametric analyses, for example t-test. Secondly, the design of the study examined two different and separate groups, the Experimental (intervention) group and the Control Group (no intervention). Since an individual participant was included in only one of two groups, with no participants shared between the groups, the groups were independent. This meets the underlying condition of the independent samples t-test – that it compares the distribution of the means from two groups with no relationship.

With regards to the assumptions, normality of data distribution was taken into account. Although the procedure did not mention that formal tests of normality were performed, the sample sizes in both groups were rather large. Given 70+ degrees of freedom, it can be assumed that each group consisted of ~35-40 participants. Based on the Central Limit Theorem, if the sample size is large enough (generally $n \geq 30$), the sampling distribution of the mean is always normal, regardless of the original population's distribution. It is thus fair to conclude that the assumption of normality has been satisfactorily met.

Homogeneity of variance, another of the standard t-test assumptions, was tested directly by Levene's Test. The F value based on the result of Levene's Test was significant [$F = 24.409, p = .000$] - suggesting lack of homogeneity of variances between the two groups. Since this assumption was not met, the t-test output for unequal variances, namely Welch's t-test, was appropriately applied in the analysis. This t-test is not sensitive to when the homogeneity of variance is violated, because if this assumption were violated, it would not guarantee the validity and reliability of the results.

Lastly, the analysis aimed to find out whether the intervention made a significant difference on the students' speaking performance as reflected through the mean Post-Speaking MUET scores of the two groups. The independent samples t-test is the most suitable statistical approach for this objective because the t-test assumes to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means of two independent groups.

In summary, the independent samples t-test was selected as data satisfied the necessary assumptions: continuous dependent variable, two independent groups, and sample size large enough to support assuming normality. The equality of the variances was tested and if violated, the corresponding corrections were employed. In view of these concerns, the application of the independent samples t-test employed in our study was valid and methodologically rigorous.

FINDINGS

The results of statistical analysis indicated the influence of intervention towards students speaking performance in which the pre-speaking and post-speaking MUET scores were used to measure the performance. Although both the Experimental and Control groups improved across time, the gains of the Experimental group were significantly larger.

Beginning Level Speaking Skills

MUET Pre Speaking Scores between both sexes. Results revealed that the Experimental group ($M = 59.39$, $SD = 2.73$) scored slightly higher than the Control group ($M = 58.79$, $SD = 2.98$), but the effect was small. The virtually identical standard deviations suggest that both sets of subjects had a more-or-less equal range of skills in their initial speaking. The standard error of the mean (SEM) values—0.44 for the Experimental group and 0.48 for the Control group—indicate that these estimates of the population mean are stable and reliable.

Speaking Ability as a Function of Treatment

The Post-Speaking MUET scores indicate a significant improvement in performance after the treatment for both groups, with the Experimental group achieving a mean score of 87.66 ($SD = 6.00$) and the Control group 82.26 ($SD = 2.91$). Both groups' improvement over time was statistically significant, but given the superior improvement in the Experimental group, this suggests that the intervention was effective.

It is important to notice that the the standard deviation for the average on the Experimental group (6.00) is noticeably greater than the the Control group average (2.91). This can be seen as reflecting the consequences of our intervention and the extent to which individual students improved. This lower standard deviation within the Control group suggests that there is greater uniformity within the group in terms of progress being shown.

Testing for Statistical Significance of the Differences

To assess the differences in post-Speaking MUET scores between the groups, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The results indicated a statistically significant difference:

- $t(74) = 4.986$, $p = .000$ (equal variances assumed)
- $t(53.490) = 4.986$, $p = .000$ (equal variances not assumed)

Since the p-value (.000) is significantly below the traditional threshold of .05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0), which posits that there is no significant difference between the groups. Consequently, we conclude that the intervention had a statistically significant positive impact on speaking performance.

Magnitude of Improvement

The mean difference of 5.39 points between and 95% CI of ~3.24 to 7.55 points indicates the Experimental group improved not just statistically, but also clinically. This range reflects that the intervention consistently outperformed other forms of treatments and there was a low likelihood that the observed difference was due to chance.

Variability in Improvement

Although the Experimental group had a mean improvement of 6.00, the standard deviation indicates much greater variability in the scores. That is to say, some students did much better than others, which could be due to a difference in learning, interest in the exercise or pre-existing skills. The Control group displaying lower standard deviation = 2.91 standard deviation there was also a lower variance around the mean improvement indicating that the conventional way of instruction produced more consistent outcomes but less impact overall than the treatment group.

Implications of Findings

This is a short but clear statement of the results, including, as so often the case, the parity of the means, but also a statement about the contribution of this study to the overall effects of the intervention. The

mean improvement in the Experimental group is substantial greater than the mean improvement score in the Control group, which indicates that this style of teaching really has a bigger effect on students speaking achievement than the traditional method. The wider variation in scores for the Experimental group also indicates that some students may need further support or adjustment in order to take full advantage of the intervention.

The statistical result shows that the intervention was an effective one in making students gain speaking proficiency. The Experimental group outperformed the Control group on the Post-Speaking MUET, with a significant mean difference of 5.39 points. This difference was statistically significant according to t-test results, supporting the effectiveness of the intervention. Despite this, the greater standard deviation in the Experimental group also indicates higher variability in individual responses, though the trend further shows that the speaking score means for the group suggests the intervention had a substantial effect on speaking proficiency. Findings from the study support innovative language skills instruction for optimizing student outcomes.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the effect of an instructional of an instructional intervention on the students in terms of speaking scores in the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). The results indicated that both experimental and control groups improved and that the experimental group improved to a greater degree than the control group. This is the evidence that the treatment was successful in improving the speaking competence of the students.

The pre-intervention speaking scores on the MUET test showed almost no between-group difference: the experimental group ($M = 59.39$, $SD = 2.73$) and the control group ($M = 58.79$, $SD = 2.98$), thus similar standard deviations among the groups reflected that the initial speaking skills were similar across the groups. After the intervention, the mean of experimental group improved to 87.66 ($SD = 6.00$), which was higher than that of control group 82.26 ($SD = 2.91$). An independent samples t-test revealed that the mean scores of the two groups for this subscale were significantly different ($t(74) = 4.986$, $p < .001$), suggesting that the intervention had a large effect in the direction of better speaking.

The wider standard deviation of the post-test scores of the experimental group means higher heterogeneity of the individual improvements. This variation might be due to students' involvement, learning preferences, or level of knowledge. The higher overall mean score, however, reiterates the effectivity of the intervention in improving speaking skills.

These results are consistent with prior studies highlighting the value of teaching innovation in foreign language acquisition. For example, PBL has been demonstrated to enhance speaking skills through the experience of students in task-by-task authentic PBL, providing active use of the language (Sirisrimangkorn, 2021).

Cultural component and communicative activities with local significance would be a strategy to raise student engagement and minimize language anxiety in the Malaysian context (Yahya, 2024). This is consistent with the intervention utilized in this study, which may have incorporated components that build a supportive and interactive learning atmosphere.

The large gain in the experimental group indicated also that treatment benefited affective attitude the importa there of predictors achievement Improve the match achieved by this intervention between the pedagogical and the learners' characteristics supported the effectiveness of this type of feedback. This between-student variability in intervention success underlines the importance of the use of rigorous methods for individual assessment and tailored instruction with interventions, so that the broadest range of students have the opportunity to respond.

Finally, this study offers empirical evidence that the use of novel, student-centred pedagogies can enhance speaking skills among ESL students. Potential inquiries into these types of interventions might include, in greater depth, the long-term effects of such methods and transferability to different educational frameworks.

Implications of the Study

In this study, the results show by using discussions in groups students are more positive and excel in the speaking compared to the normal instruction. Therefore, there are significant implications for educators, curriculum developers and policymakers indicating that a structured group discussions can be included in the MUET preparation curriculum as a potential strategy for being competent in oral communication skills.

The study, then, emphasizing that interactive learning environments are effective supports this ideal from a pedagogical perspective. This accountability through group learning also serves as a reminder of the importance of peer-to-peer interaction and the role of active participation and interaction in learning a language. Expanding on these important activities, educators should look to incorporate more student-centered and discussion driven activities into lesson plans in order to maximize student participation and development of spoken language skills. In addition, the study results can be used to orient teacher training programs so as to prepare teachers with strategies that are necessary for getting students involved in more meaningful and productive group discussions.

Indeed, it also adds to the findings behind communicative language teaching as applied to second language acquisition fields. Since MUET is designed to test students' effective communication skills in both academic and real-world settings, the results indicate that group discussions actually enhance their performance in the test but also prepare them for the communication requirements at a later stage in their academic and working careers.

Recommendations for Further Research

Though this study has shed new light on a significant topic, it also raises a number of important future research avenues. Thus, we recommended that longitudinal studies be conducted to determine the sustained impacts of group discussions on students' speaking skills. The acquirers in the past could benefit from a study of a longer length to provide evidence over the extended time period of the sustained effect of learning by discussion on the acquisition of the language.

A different avenue of potential future research is investigating whether or not group discussions are helpful outside of the scope of the distinct proficiency levels. Our study concentrates on Form 6 students, but it would be interesting to explore higher or lower secondary students in this regard or even university students. It would also be interesting to examine what level of English learners bring, and how the groups need to be arranged in terms of ability in the language to achieve the greatest possible benefit.

Secondly, qualitative data could provide more information regarding the factors that enhance speaking skills in group discussions, such as, if feedback from peers, building confidence or motivation helped improve speaking.

In addition, one potential area of research that should be further investigated is the use of technology within group discussions. Future research could focus on why group discussions conducted through video conferencing or a variety of online forums can compare or complement the effectiveness of face-to-face discussions in promoting students' speaking abilities with their peers since the use of digital platforms for this purpose is continually growing.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research clearly shows that this intervention has a strong contribution to improving students' speaking ability. It means that as test scores of Post-Speaking MUET were compared, the level of improvement by the Experimental group was significantly higher than the Control group. The results showed that the intervention that has been done is an effective one in improving students speaking skill. In addition, this variability within the Experimental group begs for differentiated instructional approaches, so that optimal student growth is achieved by all. The consequences deriving from the present study highlight the need to incorporate practices of innovative teaching into language agencies so as to enhance the student output.

This study emphasizes the importance of providing targeted intervention in language education. Other variables related to students such as motivation, engagement, and retention of speaking abilities that learned from the intervention in a long term could be investigated in future research. The findings endorse the continuous improvement of ESL teaching approaches for speaking in different contexts.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all individuals and institutions who contributed to the successful completion of this study.

Special thanks are extended to Open University Malaysia, the Institute of Teacher Education, Ilmu Khas Campus Kuala Lumpur, and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for their academic support and the facilities provided throughout the research process.

The authors also wish to thank the administration of the secondary school in Kuala Lumpur for granting permission and offering full cooperation during the data collection, as well as the Form 6 students who participated as respondents in this study.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

REFERENCES

- Creswell, J. W. (2021). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (6th ed.). Pearson.
- Harun, H., Bosro, M. Z. M., Palpanadan, S. T., Ibrahim, M. Y., Mohd Sohaimi, N. A., & Abdul Latif Jannaton, N. A. (2021). Malaysian public university students' challenging skills to pass Malaysian University English Test (MUET). *AIP Conference Proceedings*, 2347, 020031. <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0052716>
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2019). Cooperative learning: The power of group learning. *Educational Researcher*, 48(7), 469–476. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X19867925>
- Kaur, S., Sidhu, G. K., & Fong, L. L. (2021). MUET English Examination as a Predictor of Academic Achievement for TESL Teacher Trainees at a Public Teacher Education Institution in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 10(3), 234-248. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355319000_MUET_English_Examination_as_a_Predictor_of_Academic_Achievement_for_TESL_Teacher_Trainees_at_a_Public_Teacher_Education_Institution_in_Malaysia
- Malaysian Examinations Council. (2021). *MUET Test Specification and Test Format*. Malaysian Examinations Council. <https://www.mpm.edu.my/>

- Nguyen, K. A., Borrego, M., Finelli, C. J., DeMonbrun, M., Crockett, C., Tharayil, S., Shekhar, P., Waters, C., & Rosenberg, R. (2021). Instructor strategies to aid implementation of active learning: a systematic literature review. *International Journal of STEM Education*, 8 (9), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-021-00270-7>
- Sirisrimangkorn, L. (2021). Improving EFL undergraduate learners' speaking skills through project-based learning using presentation. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 12(3), 65–72. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiall.v12n.3.p.65>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Yahya, N. (2024). Teaching approaches and motivational strategies on Malaysian tertiary learners' speaking engagement. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(1), 45-52. <https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/articles/teaching-approaches-and-motivational-strategies-on-malaysian-tertiary-learners-speaking-engagement/>
- Zulkflee, Z., Marimuthu, P., & Mohd Tahir, M. H. (2023). Speaking anxiety during MUET-CEFR aligned oral presentations among ESL learners in Perak. *World Journal of English Language*, 13(2), 176–176. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n2p176>.